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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine whether gender affects the acceptance of a community college president, and the perception of his/her effectiveness as a leader. Open-ended interviews were conducted with approximately 11 individuals, including trustees, faculty, administrative and clerical staff, and the president, at 10 California community colleges. Five colleges with male presidents were paired with five colleges with women presidents on the basis of district structure, enrollment, and location. Findings revealed that there is a difference in expectations of male and female presidents when they are first appointed, but that over time, stereotypical biases are superseded by a more realistic evaluation of the individual's abilities and skills. Stereotypical biases were that women are not able to make strong independent decisions and that they are more likely to base decisions on emotion rather than logic. Women respondents felt errors and weaknesses are more readily tolerated in male than female presidents. Presidential leadership styles did not fall into gender patterns, although women were more likely to have a participatory style. The most successful presidents blended traditionally male and female traits. The study concludes that although stereotyping of female leaders persists, it is the individual's personality and training that determines leadership style. (KP)

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